

# **Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG)**

## **Background**

- One of two grant programs created by the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005 (HERA)
- Encourage students to be academically prepared for college
- Help maintain U.S. competitiveness in global economy

## **Award Amounts**

- \$750 for first year students
- \$1,300 for second year students

## **General ACG Eligibility Criteria**

- Federal Pell Grant recipient for same award year
- First or second year student in a:
  - Two or four year degree program
  - One or two year certificate program offered at a two or four year-year degree granting institution
- Completion of a rigorous secondary school program

## **ACG Eligibility Criteria: First Year Students**

- Not previously enrolled as a degree seeking student in an undergraduate program while enrolled in high school and below the age of compulsory attendance
- Completed secondary program of study after January 1, 2006

## **ACG Eligibility Criteria: Second Year Students**

- Completed secondary program of study after January 1, 2005
- Has at least a 3.0 GPA in an eligible program from first year of college study

## **Rigorous Secondary School Program Options**

- State designated programs
  - An advanced or honors diploma established by a state and in existence for the 2004-05 and 2005-06 school years
  - State Scholar's Initiative
  - Submitted state recognized plan
- Coursework designated by the Secretary
  - 4 years of English
  - 3 years of mathematics (Algebra I and higher)
  - 3 years of science (biology, chemistry, physics)
  - 3 years of social studies
  - 1 year of a foreign language
- AP/IB
  - Successful completion of any secondary school program for a student who completes at least two courses with a minimum passing test score on the exams in those courses
    - ◆ Score of at least 3 for Advanced Placement
    - ◆ Score of at least 4 for International Baccalaureate
- All states have at least one designated rigorous program
- Students from every state have at least three ways to meet rigorous program requirement

## **Documenting Completion of Rigorous Programs**

- Colleges required to collect and retain documentation that confirms a student meets at least one of the rigorous program options
- Colleges may document the eligibility option that is the most efficient for the them
  - Students may meet more than one definition of rigorous program

## **How Students Apply**

- FAFSA on the Web
  - Submit FAFSA
  - If data indicates eligibility, prompted to answer questions

- Paper FAFSA
  - Student Aid Report (SAR) will indicate possible eligibility
  - Instructed to call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4FEDAID (1-800-433-3243) to answer questions about eligibility
- Self identify to financial aid office
  - In person or in writing
  - Will need to submit documentation

### **What Counselors Can Do**

- Encourage students to take courses that meet the definition of “rigor”
- Provide students with documentation showing they have meet the rigorous program criterion
  - Provide in a timely manner
  - Provide to students or directly to college
- Let students enrolled in AP or IB classes how important it is to take the exams
- Tell students about the program
- Emphasize importance of first year GPA

### **GPA for Second Year ACG**

- For second year, student must have a cumulative GPA of at least a 3.0 from first year
- GPA only checked once, at the end of first year
  - Cannot gain eligibility during second year

### **Resources**

- <http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/about/ac-smart/state-programs.html>
  - Rigorous high school program codes
  - Lists by graduation year

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